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Untranslatability of texts: equivalence and cultural perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Translation has become an utmost necessity or the educational, scientific, technological, social economic and political developments at the global level for maintaining international and mutual cordiality. Translation plays a crucial role in initiating and promoting cross-cultural communication and bringing closer divergent socio-cultural groups by enabling mutual appreciation of their cultures. However, the development of theories on the nature of language and communication provided a growing medium for the analysis of the possibility or impossibility of elaborating concepts in a language different from that in which they were conceived. Some theorists accepted the existence of incompatibilities between languages but did not deny the concept; alternative forms of translation to a literal decoding-recoding process were called for. While some scholars, however do not adhere to the theory of universal translatability. Thus, this paper examines the notion of untranslatability with special reference to equivalence and cultural perspectives. This paper utilizes the method of qualitative analysis. That is, data for the study were sourced from secondary sources and collected from documentations through published and unpublished books, journal articles among others, and were content analyzed in relation to the scope of the paper.

Keywords: translation, untranslatability, equivalence, cultural

1. INTRODUCTION

There still remains the issue of evaluating the final product of translation and many of the fundamental questions of translation studies are still provoking vigorous debate and very little global consensus. First among these questions is the nature and resulting legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of translation itself (Venuti, 2000).

While multiple attempts of defining translation as a process, concept and philosophy have achieved varying levels of success over the past two decades, each has had to compete with the growing number of voices claiming that translation is another name for the impossibility' (Derrida & Mensah, 1998). Apter (2014) argues against a perceived translatability assumption (the assumption that all texts are subject to translation), which is at play in the contemporary study and consumption of world literature. In the history of both theoretical research of translation and translation practice, there have been general debate over the issue of translatability and untranslatability.

In order to understand what it means to refer to certain aspects of language as 'untranslatable', two key important concepts have to be taken into consideration, namely; equivalence and culture. Inevitably, the notion of untranslatability of the two mentioned concepts which, undoubtedly, matters significantly to the emergence of this notion in translation studies (Al-Saidi and Rashid, 2016). While Catford (1965) distinguishes between linguistic and cultural untranslatability, Popovic (1976) described two situations from which untranslatability may result:

- i. When the absence of connotative and denotative meanings in the target language leads to an inadequate replacement of the linguistic elements in structural, linear, functional or semantic terms
- ii. When the target language is not able to express the relation between the original creative subject and its linguistic expression.

Though it has been widely conceived that translation is not possible, Mounin (1963) however, maintained that instead of stressing on untranslatability itself, scholars need to look for the possible solutions of this problem. Following linguistics, he noted that translation is a dialectic process that can be accomplished with relative success. He maintains that it is finally the responsibility of the translator to look for proper solution to deal with the problems he/she encounters while translating.

Therefore, this paper explored the notion of untranslatability with special reference to equivalence and culture and provides answer to why the notion of untranslatability emerges in the translation theory and practice.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts qualitative research design; the researchers used descriptive analysis to examine untranslatability with special reference to equivalence and culture. The study which is theoretical in nature draws its argument basically from secondary data which include journal articles, books and internet sources, and were content analyzed in relation to the scope of the study.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Translation

According to Savory (1957) translation is an art. Jacobsen (1958) defined translation as a craft; while Foster (1958) described translation as a science. According to Raquel (1999), translation means to echo the original into a new language. The idea of an 'echo' is as nebulous as that of the purity of language. Frenz (1961) claimed that translation is neither a creative art nor an initiative art, but stands somewhere between the two. This emphasis on terminological debate in English points again to the problematic of English Translation Studies. For Levy (1967:148), translation is "a process of communication whose objective is to import the knowledge of the original to the foreign reader". Similarly, Finlay (1971:17) defined translation as "a bilingual mediated process of communication which ordinarily aims at the production of a target language (TL) text that is functionally equivalent to a source language (SL) text".

Echoing the similar viewpoint, Pinhhuck (1977:38) defined translation as "a process of finding a TL equivalent for an SL utterance". Robinson (1997:51) views translation as "an intelligent activity, requiring creative problem-solving in novel textual, social and cultural conditions".

Translation as Adewuni (200:1) puts forward, is "a reality despite the complications and doubt attached to it based on the nature of the elements involved, the languages, the cultures and the translator". However, Belloc (1931:22) believes that "a good translation must possess the potential of being evaluated like a first-class native thing". He maintains that translation must consciously attempt the spirit of the original at the expense of the letter. Translation, as Nida and Taber (1982) puts forward, consists of producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style. We can observe that meaning has started to be taken into consideration, representing the first aspect to be taken into account when translating. The problem of equivalence becomes a central focus for theories. That is why the concept of equivalence in terms of translating culture, i.e what differentiates and identifies us, becomes a crucial issue.

Translatability

Scholars, who cling to the idea of translatability, consider that people of different nations share a wide range of communication in ideology, cognition, logic and expression, all of which could help people with the practice of intercultural, interdisciplinary, international communication and exchange. Essentially, no one can deny a basic fact that there have already existed a lot of translation works, which have extensively and profoundly contributed to the exchange of human civilization (Wang & Sunihan, 2014). It has been mentioned by Liu (199:99) in his *Modern Translation Theories* that there exists "channel of message transferring" which makes translation possible.

Translatability, as Newmark (2001:7) puts forward, is "an attempted practice to replace a written or verbal message in one language by the same written or verbal message in another language, involving some kind of loss of meaning, owing to various factors". In this situation, the more meaning is lost, the less translatable it will be and the less meaning is lost, the more translatable it will be (Shama, 2018). Translation studies as the academic discipline which concerns itself with the study of translation was conceived as a linguistic theory of translation or a science of translation (Nida, 1964; Cui, 2012), whose aim was to give a precise description

of the equivalence relations between signs and combination signs in the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) (El-Daly, 2015).

Problems of Translation

Belloc, 1931 cited in El-daly (2015:371) affirms that “the art of translation is a subsidiary art and derivative. On this account, it has never been granted the dignity of original work, and has suffered too much in the general judgment of letters. This natural underestimation of its value has had the bad practical effect of lowering the standard demand, and in some periods has almost destroyed the art altogether. The corresponding misunderstanding of its character has added to its degradation; neither its importance nor its difficulty has been grasped”. Culler (1976:21) is of the view that languages are nomenclatures and the concepts of one language may differ radically from others, since each language articulates the world differently, and languages do not simply name categories; they articulate their own”. The conclusion likely to be drawn from the above assertions is that one of the major problems of translation is disparity among languages”. According to Miremedi (1991), translation problems are divided into two main categories. These are lexical problems and syntactic problems.

Lexical Problems

In the interpretation of lexical problems, Miremedi (1991) states that, although words are entities that refer to objects or concepts, a word in one language may not be substituted with a word in another language when referring to the same concepts or objects. He further divided lexical problems into five subcategories such as:

- i. **Denotative Meaning:** This kind of meaning refers to those words of the source text that can be matched with those of the target text without missing images. E.g. mother, father, e.t.c.
- ii. **Lexical Meaning:** This refers to words or phrases which seem to be equivalent, although in that situation, this may be the case; the translator must be aware of the intention beyond the words in order not to misrepresent the author’s message.
- iii. **Metaphorical Expression:** This refers to the problematic issues of translating idioms and similar expressions. However, Miremedi (1991) offers the following suggestions for translating idiomatic expressions
 - a) Distinguishing between ordinary expressions and metaphors
 - b) Having access to the resources of translating a single metaphor
 - c) Being aware of different contexts and their constraints on using metaphors
 - d) Correctly realizing the constraints on the translation, and rendering the message.
- iv. **Semantic Voids:** This includes those words and/or expressions that represent concepts that cannot be found in other special communities. The close equivalents may be found, although the exact equivalent cannot e.g. intra-linguistics factors such as those concepts that may exist in two language communities but the structure of their use may be completely different.
- v. **Proper Names:** Here, proper names refers to individuals and can be another, sometimes the specific meaning that they carry, which do not exist in the target speech community, may be lost.

- vi. **Syntactic Problems:** According to Miremedi (1991), one cannot find two languages that have the exact identical systems of structural organizations. That is, language structure varies from one language to another. These differences include:
- a) **Word Classes:** Languages differ from each other in the internal and formation classification
 - b) **Grammatical Relations:** This difference exists among the languages in the way that a constituent of a sentence functions within that sentence.
 - c) **Word order and style**
 - d) **Pragmatic aspects**

Considering all these problems, translator is expected to convey the message of the Source Text (ST) to Target Text (TT) or readers. However, there is no completely exact translation between any two languages and as Werner, 1961 cited in Miremedi (1991) quoted, the degree of approximation between two language systems determines the effectiveness of the translation. In addition of foregoing, the current issue in translation is the age of Information Communication Technology (ICT) which have changes are more prominent particularly in the types of electronic instruments used, the texts and the translator's ability machine new technology process. The speed, growing needs, time and the amount of translation necessitate the use of automated machine translation (MT) (Saroukhil et al, 2018). In recent times, machine translation compete with human translators but cannot replace human translator as there is always something left beyond the reach of machine translation; that is, the human element of creativity. In fact, machine translation creates more work for human translators. Human translator fills the gap in conveying the dynamic cultural components of communication between nations as he is aware of nuances of meaning and subtle cultural elements unknown to the automated machine (Durdureanu, 2013; Jabarouti, 2016)

Translation Strategies

It would almost be true to say that there are no universally accepted principles of translation because the only people qualified to formulate them have never agreed among themselves. Different scholars suggest different strategies according to their particular perspectives. Gerloff (1988) categorized translation strategies to different groups such as problem identification, linguistics analysis, storage and retrieval, general search and selection, interfering and reasoning strategies, text contextualization, editing and task monitoring. Jaaskelainen (1993) believes in strategy as a series of competences, a set of steps that favour acquisition, storage and utilization of information. He believes that some strategies are related to what happens to the texts while other types of strategies are related to what happens in the process. Another scholar, Venuti (1995) believes that translation strategies involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it. Vinay and Darbelnet (2000) categorize translation strategies as follows:

- i. **Borrowing:** This refers to the borrowing of word or expression from source text which is foreign to the target reader.
- ii. **Literal Translation:** It means the translator follows the ST from as closely as possible without following the SL structure.

- iii. **Transportation:** This refers to any change in word class. For example, adjective to noun.
- iv. **Modulation:** This is changing point of view or cognitive category in relation to the source text (ST)
- v. **Adaptation:** This is a shift in cultural reference when the type of situation being referred to by the source text is unknown in the target culture.
- vi. **Clause Structure Change:** This refers to a strategy in which the change affects the organization of the constituent phrase or clauses. Example, changes from active to passive, finite to infinite or rearrangement of the clause constituents.
- vii. **Cohesion Change:** This refers to a strategy which affects intra – textual cohesion. This kind of strategy mainly takes place in the form of reference by pronouns, ellipsis, substitution or repetition;
- viii. **Sentence Structure Change:** This refers to changes in the structure of the sentence unit.
- ix. **Paraphrase Structure Change:** This refers to challenges which take place in the internal structure of the noun phrase or verb phrase, although the SL phrase itself may be translated by a corresponding phrase in the TL.
- x. **Level Shift:** This refers to the phonological, morphological, syntactical and lexical levels. These levels are expressed variously in different languages
- xi. **Scheme Change:** This refers to rhetorical schemata such as parallelism, alliteration and rhythm and rhyming in poetry.
- xii. **Abstraction Change:** this strategy concerns shifting either from more abstract terms to more concrete ones or vice versa.
- xiii. **Distribution Change:** This is a kind of strategy in which the same semantic component is distributed over more items (expansion) or fewer ones (compression).
- xiv. **Emphasis Change:** This strategy increases, decreases or changes the emphasis of thematic focus of the translated text in comparison to the original.
- xv. **Explicitness Change:** Here some information of the ST may be added or deleted to make the text more or less explicit.
- xvi. **Interpersonal Change:** This is used to affect the whole style of the text to make it more or less informed or technical.
- xvii. **Visibility Change:** This is a strategy that increases the presence of either the author of the ST or its translator, example, footnotes.
- xviii. **Trans-editing:** This refers to extensive editing of the original text when necessary. That is, changing the organization of the ST information wording, etc.
- xix. **Cultural Filtering:** This strategy is generally used while translating culture – bound items. It is described as the concrete realization, at the level of language, of the universal strategy of domestication or target culture-oriented translation.

- xx. **Speech Act:** This refers to the strategy that changes the nature of the ST speech act, either obligatory or non-obligatory. Example, from reporting to a command or from direct to indirect speech.

Translation Approaches

There are two major approaches to translation. These are linguistic (the equivalence and the functional approach) and cultural approaches.

Equivalence Approach

Proponents of this approach share the view that translation is an attempt to produce the source target as closely as possible by means of different types of equivalence. According Reiss (1989), translation is good if it achieves certain equivalence.

This means that the linguistic together with the situational context and stylistic level on the one hand and the intention of the author, the target text and target text units have the same values as those of the source text (Reiss (1989) further posits that there is the involvement of certain programmatic categories suggested for the stage of comparison such as the situation reference to real world objects, space, time target audience, the sender and effective implications.

In analyzing the source text by means of situational linguistic characteristics representing two dimensions: language and user: this in turn include the following subcategories such as social class, geographical origin, social attitude, participation, social role, relationship, time and medium.

Functional Approach

The functionalists view translation as an act of communication that is done for a act of communication that is done for a specific purpose. Although, this view is held by most functionalists, yet some others go even further in viewing the target text as an independent text. According to this idea, Nord (1997:12) considers translating as “producing a text in a target addresses in target circumstances.

For the functionalists, the state of the source text is much lower than that of the equivalence based theory since the former regard source text as an offer of information that is tuned in part or in whole into an offer of information for the target audience, the function of the translation takes priority over the other factors”.

Wilss, 1982 cited in Tanku (2013:233) propose “what might be considered as new steps towards functionalism. He first criticizes the old treatment of translation criticism held till the mid-20th century for demanding source target oriented translation and judging translations accordingly.

He posits that the linguistics approach if it is based on text – related and text-type related critical framework may be valid since it helps the critic to systemize and evaluate the linguistic and situational factors in the process.

But he also adds that for the assessment to be further developed, the translator’s role must be tkane into consideration seriously. He admits that this could not be achieved without subjectivity but this should not impede the assessment procedure”. To Wilss, objectivity in this regards is necessary but it is pointless to make the assessment procedures more scientific than is sensible because he believed that translation is a science, n art and a skill at the same time.

Cultural Approach

It has been long taken for granted that translation deals only with language. The cultural perspective was not taken into consideration until 1980s. according to Snell – Hornby (1988:39), the “exclusion of cultural aspect from the discussion of translation theory is due to the view of the traditional approach in linguistics which draws a sharp dividing-line between language and extra linguistic reality such as culture and situation”. For the Skopos theorist and functionalists, such as Reiss, Vermeer, Nord and Witte cited in Baker (1997:305) culture is “inextricable bound to translation.

They adopt a social perspective on culture, so that functionalists consider that communication (translation too is a form of communication) is oriented towards particular goals, which assign particular text functions to texts and generate culture – specific text-types”. Nord (1997) make an in-depth analysis of the act of translation and the cultural exchanges involved. Nord even used the term ‘linguaculture’ in order to show the tight connection between these concepts. In addition, the “connection between culture and language was first formally formulated by Wilhelm Von Humboldt. For his german philosopher, language was something dynamic; it was an activity rather than a static inventory of items as the product of activity. At the same time, language is an expression of culture and individuality of the speakers, who perceive the word through language” (Snell-Hornby, 1988:40) Halliday and Hasan (1985) states that there was the theory of context before the theory of text. Context here means context precedes text.

Context here means context of situation and culture. This context is necessary for adequate understanding of the text, which becomes the first requirement for translating. Thus, translating without understanding text is non-sense and understanding text without understanding its culture is impossible (Tanku, 2013). Therefore, language is not free of cultural influence. If the culture behind the language which is being translated is not appreciated, an accurate translation is extremely difficult (Tonkin & Frank, 2010). From the foregoing, it is obvious that one is limited by the language used to express one’s idea. Therefore, language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next.

Untranslatability

Some scholars believe that there are many non-substitutable elements existing in different languages such as its cultural tradition, social customs, emotion and some unique words and syntactic structure, whose equivalent elements cannot be found in another language (Catford, 1965; Schulte and Biguenet, 1992; Jabarouti, 2016). According to Gleeson (2015:35), “when considering the issues of linguistic untranslatability, it is legitimate to adopt what Nicholas Harrison calls a ‘down-to- earth’ definition of translation; converting a text from one language (in the usual sense of language: French, for instance) into another language. Here the focus is on impossibilities of translation regarding the structural ‘building blocks’ of language and the concept of words and texts as vessels of meaning takes a secondary position”.

According to Cui (2012: 826), untranslatability is “a property of text or of any utterance in one language for which no equivalent text or utterance can be found in another language”. Wang and Sunihan (2014:120) affirm that “the factors resulting in the problem of untranslatability are roughly classified into linguistic obstructions and cultural obstructions. In this sense, the loss of meaning is inevitable during the process of translation, so the absolute

'faithfulness' is just an ideal that is hard to achieve, and language is untranslatable to some extent". Catford (1965) posits that in order for textual equivalence to exist, source language and target language elements must have the some essential features in common. He further noted that the problem of translatability and untranslatability is not dichotomy; it is more like the variant between the absolute translatability and absolute untranslatability. Lecercle (2008) provides a coherent example in his argument for absolute untranslatability of what he called 'pure nonsense' in literature. This is nonsense language which is not watered down, mixed with intelligible language but created as independently of extent linguistic systems as possible, reaching the outer edge of intelligibility in language.

Equivalence Untranslatability

Both the concept of equivalence and the principle of equivalence effect have come to be heavily criticized for a number of reasons. Van Den (1981) considers equivalent effect or response to be impossible. Indeed, the whole question of equivalence inevitably entails subjective judgment from the translator or analyst. According to ECO (2003:63), the difference between cultures and individual interpretations of readers make it impossible to achieve 'full equivalence' between the source text (S-text) and the target text (T-text). Similarly, Jabarouti (2016:96) explains that "that purpose of the translation cannot be to provide identical meaning and style of expression in the S-text and T-text. Instead, the translator needs to prioritize and select the meanings and elements the need to be carried to the target text. It is sometimes possible that the translator provides some explanations (e.g., in the form of footnotes, endnotes, or inside brackets), to make the target reader familiar with a culture specific meaning or element in the source text. However, this strategy involves the risk of explaining more than what the original text intends to convey".

Nida 1964 Cited in Shakernia (2013:2) argued that "there are two different types of equivalence; namely, formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence tries to remain as close to the original text as possible without adding the translator's ideas and thoughts into the translation. This is therefore much more of a word-for-word view of translation. The problem with the form of translation is that it assumes a moderate degree of familiarity with the subject matter on the part of the reader. The King James Version (KJV) and English Standard version (ESV) are two examples of formal equivalence translation problem. Most printings of the KJV specially mark words (using square brackets or italics) that are implied but not actually in the original source text (S-text), since words must sometimes be added to have valid English grammar resulted to linguistic untranslatability". According to Catford (1965:98), linguistic untranslatability is "failure to find a target language equivalent is due entirely to differences between the source language". Some examples of this type of untranslatability are ambiguity, oligosemy, plays on words etc. dynamic equivalence on the other hand involves taking each sentence (or thought) from the original text and rendering it into a sentence in the target language that conveys the same meaning but does not necessarily use the exact phrasing or idioms of the original. Dynamic equivalence sacrifices more faithfulness to the original text to achieve a more natural translation.

In addition, Nida (1964) affirmed that dynamic equivalence tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture without insisting that he understand the cultural patterns of the source (language context). According to him problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two (or more) languages concerned. Nida cites his example from Bible translation where the phrase 'Lamb of

God would be rendered into ‘Seal of God’ for the Eskimos because the Lamb does not symbolize innocence in their culture.

Cultural Untranslatability

According to Catford (1965:99), cultural untranslatability occurs “when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the source language (SL) text is completely absent from the culture of which the target language (TL) is a part”. Nida (1964) posits that words have meaning only in terms of the total cultural setting. Then what is culture? According to Thanasoulas (2001), culture or civilization taken in its wide anthropographic sense is that complete whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society. In the view of Duranti (1997:24), cultures is “something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication”. Newmark (1958) affirms that language is not a component of culture, whereas Vermeer’s opinion, it would be impossible to translate cultural elements.

According to Duradureanu (2011:54), “there are thousands of ‘culture-bound’ terms, deeply rooted in culture, which the translator has to deal with. In 1959, Vinay and Darbelnet gave some examples of areas culture such as time division, jobs, positions and professions, food, drink, baking, particular aspects of social life, etc. In 1964, Catford talks about measurements, coins, institutions, clothing, etc. All these terms differentiate a community from another and are difficult to translate”. Santoyo (2010:15) adds certain sports, dances, musical and artistic terms, specific areas of activity which correspond in the end to actions which are unique to a person or social group, subject to very specific place and time”. That is why there have been many voices which claimed either for the possibility or for the impossibility of translation. Diritiu (2002) presents some of the ‘untranslatable terms’ which relates to geography, historic and socio-cultural experience: gentleman, understatement (English), charme, esprit (French) dor, taina, spatiu mioritic (Romanian). Abu-Mahfouz (2011) sustained the impossibility of translation by the very existence of poetry, full of connotations and stylistic devices, which cannot be translated.

However, Nida (2015) noted that “anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message”. Thus, disregarding the possibility of the existence of cultural untranslatability therefore, translatability and untranslatability are just like the two sides of one coin, contrary but coexisting and correlated, which can thus be unified and even converted along with the development of languages and the increasing intercultural communication. Sharma (2018) believes that untranslatability is not a reality but a myth because it is a problem of translator and not the act of translation.

The interpretation of text elements in both source and target texts is affected by the translator’s cultural competence in both the source and target cultures as well as in the sub-cultural semiospheres within both cultures. Hence, the number of meanings contained in a single text element can be immense, making it hard to transfer all cultural subset specific meanings when translating a text. Translation is, then, basically based on the translator’s familiarity with the language and culture of both the source and target text. In any case, however, it is impossible to create a translated text that is exactly the same as the original text in meaning and manner (Jabarouti, 2016).p

According to El-Daly (2015:379), a modern translation study is “no longer concerned with examining whether a translation has been ‘faithful’ to a source text. Instead, the focus is

on social, cultural and communicative practices, on the cultural and ideological significance of translating and of translations, on the external politics of translation, on the relationship between translation behavior and socio-cultural factors”. The translatability of a text is guaranteed by the existence of universal categories in syntax, semantic and the natural logic of experience. Should a translation nevertheless fail to measure up to the original in terms of quality and meaning, the reason will not be an insufficiency of syntactic and lexical inventories in that particular target language (TL), but rather the limited ability of the translator in regard to text analysis (koskinen, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

While there are several theories which might prove appropriate for a discourse of this nature, the Functional theory of language by Karl Bühler (1963) present us with a heuristic tool for interrogating the central issue of this paper. According to the theory, language has three main functions. These are the expressive, the informative and the vocative functions. Every original text exercises at the same time these three main functions with a text the translator has to ask him or her several questions: to which text-type does it belong? Should the focus of translation be on the authors on the readers?

The conflict of loyalties, the gap between emphasis on source and target language will always remain as the overriding issue in translation theory and practice. Newmark (1988) suggests narrowing the gap by replacing the old terms with those of semantic and communicative translation, with the former mainly for expressive texts and the latter mainly for informative and vocative. The difference between semantic translation and communicative translation is that the former focuses on the meaning while the latter focuses on the effect. That is, semantic translation remains within the original culture and language as much as possible, while communicative translation addresses itself solely to readers in the target language, who do not anticipate difficulties and would expect a general transfer of foreign elements into his/her own culture and language where necessary (Shakernai, 2013).

However, Nida (2015) argued that the function of a message is of overwhelming importance in translation and emphasizes the capacity for adjustment of languages. But the strongest argument for disregarding the existence of untranslatability is the very existence of universals in language, thought and culture. Languages are particular cases of lingual universals, so that human reason can be rendered in all languages. Dore (2019) states that all languages have the same classes of referents: entities, activities, states processes, characteristic, relational whereas power relations, solidarity and religion characterize every cultural community. The various differences between languages can be solved through the specific expressive resources of each language, by operating at the Saussurian level of parole rather than that of langue. Thus, disregarding the possibility of the existence of untranslatability relying on the functional theory of language, Harvey (2000:2) offers “four major techniques for a good translation. First is functional equivalence, this technique implies using a referent in the target culture whose function is similar to that of the source language referent.

The second technique is the formal equivalence, which stands for a word-for-word translation. The third is transcription or borrowing. In other words, reproducing or translating the original term. This technique is part of the source language-oriented strategies. Finally, there is a descriptive or self-explanatory technique, according to which the translator uses generic terms to convey the meaning. It is appropriate in a wide variety of contexts where formal equivalence is considered insufficiently clear”.

For the skopos theorist and functionalists, such as Vermeer, Reiss, Nord, Witte cited in Baker (1997:305), culture is “inextricable bound to translation. They adopt a social perspective on culture, so that functionalists consider that communication (translation too is a form of communication) is oriented towards particular goals, which assign particular text functions to texts and generate culture-specific text-types”. The move from translation of text to translation of culture is called ‘cultural turn’ (Hornby, 1990). Moreover, as House (2008) clearly stated, if we opt for contextually-oriented linguistic approaches-which see language as a social phenomenon embedded in culture and view the properly understood meaning of any linguistic item as requiring reference to the cultural context, we can tackle translation from a linguistic and cultural perspective. While considering translation as a particular type of culturally determined practice, it is also a predominantly linguistic procedure.

Functional theory is the first theory to disregard untranslatability and the first to recognize change or shift in the translation studies. It moved the focus of attention away from the source text to target text and stressed cultural and linguistic features (Gentzler, 1993). According to Nord (1992), function accounts for variation in methods and strategies in different translation situation. In her theory of function plus loyalty, function refers to the factors that make a target text work in the intended way, while loyalty limits the range of justifiable target text functions. Yet the effects of translation are also social, and they have been harnessed to cultural, economic and political agendas; evangelical programmes, commercial ventures and colonial projects as well as the development of languages, national literatures and avant-garde literary movements. Therefore, function is a variable notion of how translation text is connected to the receiving language and culture.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The conception of untranslatability has its roots in idealistic philosophy. The denial of translatability presupposes a subjective ranking of the various languages and sustaining the view that some languages are not apt for expressing certain aspects of human experience. The notion to untranslatability has been unpopular in the twentieth century mainly due to ideological reasons. With the expansion in the concept of translation in the twentieth century, the debate on untranslatability versus translatability loses part of its validity, since the various strategies that translators can resort to when confronted with a gap between two languages or two cultures are acknowledged as sound translation mechanisms. On account of the diversity and complexity of language and culture, the problem of untranslatability actually exists. However, it is not absolute.

A practical approach to translation must accept that, since not everything that appears in source text (ST) can be reproduced in the target text (TT), an evaluation of potential losses has to be carried out. Since anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, it is the duty of the translator to explore the cultural connotation of the language deeply.

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